

# **Middletown Open Space & Fields Committee**

## **Minutes of Meeting**

**April 20, 2011**

### **Agenda**

**Review and approval of minutes: The minutes of the March 6 and April 5, 2011 committee meetings were approved as amended.**

### **Discussion with Shawn Brown, Town Administrator**

- **The Valley property, consisting of 45 acres, was purchased in 2000 in order to prevent development and preserve it. It was recognized at the time of the purchase that contaminants (arsenic and Dieldren) were present in the soil. If the public is to have access to the Valley, environmental remediation is required. One alternative is natural remediation using switchgrass or poplar trees or other vegetation. A second alternative would be active remediation, however, the cost is estimated to the \$200,000–300,000 per acre. Due to the environmental conditions, public access to the Valley is restricted. To better advise the public that access is not permitted, a fence will be erected around the property with appropriate warning signs.**

**Looking forward, the goals and plans for the Valley will need to be determined, as well as how to proceed with remediation. One concept is simply to wait and retest since Dieldren has a half life of**

**five years. In terms of the use of the property, perhaps the most beneficial public use is as a greenway trail located east of Bailey's Brook connecting the Valley with the memorial site near the intersection of Green End Avenue and Valley Road, with Green End Pond and Easton's Beach.**

- At one time, construction of a Farmer's Market on the Valley property was being considered, however, the desirability of that project is not site limited. Consideration should be given to locating it on the Boulevard Nurseries/Tibbets Farm complex. Although community gardening/community farming is not currently being actively studied, those properties could be used for that purpose.**

- The committee's proposed Park Steward Program will be discussed in May by the Town Council.**

- Access to Linden Park from Willow Avenue has for many years been through the residential property of an abutting owner. The owner may decide not to allow the public to continue to cross the property. If the owner's decision is not to allow the public to cross the property, the Town will erect a snow fence to block access to the park.**

- Possible acquisition of real property within the Town was discussed, including the two lots adjacent to Howland Park that are currently for sale and the Navy property on the west side. The two lots adjacent to Howland Park were evaluated using the Open Space**

**Acquisition Policy guidelines; the result was a point score of 17. The results of the evaluation were provided to the Town Administrator**

**The Town and state of Rhode Island are working on acquisitions for recreation use that will provide west side coastline access; the process may take 5 years. The former Navy Lodge property at the intersection of West Main Road and Coddington Highway is under the jurisdiction of the Planning Board.**

- The question of the policy concerning the presence of dogs in parks was discussed. It appears that Albro Woods and Paradise Park are the only parks open to dogs. A suggestion was made that dog waste containers be placed at each location, others, however, that such containers were nuisances and that the better policy was that anything taken in being taken out.**

**Another suggestion was that a third area be designated for dog access and that a user fee be established for that area, with pro-active enforcement of the waste removal requirement.**

#### **Old Business:**

- The preparations are in place for Earth Day activities, with Public Works personnel providing supplies at areas scheduled for cleanup.**
- Other than its limited size, the principal issue at Howland Park is the hockey rink. Hockey players need to be respectful of park property**

**and ensure their conduct does not interfere with the enjoyment of other park users.**

**New Business:**

- A site visit to the Albro Woods/Tibbetts Farm/Boulevard Nurseries properties will be conducted on Thursday, May 5, at 5:30 p.m.**
- The committee agreed that a digital file of Open Space & Fields Committee-related materials, to include maps, should be created. Anne Baptista has the lead on this initiative.**

**Ralph Thomas**

**Recording Secretary**